

Vol. X No. 4

Summer 1988

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# Creation

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# Social Science

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# and Humanities

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# QUARTERLY

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# CREATION SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES SOCIETY

The Creation Social Science and Humanities Society (CSSHS) was incorporated in Wichita, Kansas, in 1977. The CSSHS is educational, and will promote and disseminate information on the implications of the Biblical creation model of origins for the social sciences and humanities, with emphasis on the development of these disciplines in accordance with the rapidly emerging and increasingly well established natural scientific models of Biblical creation.

The **Quarterly Journal** is directed toward teachers and students of the social sciences and humanities, especially in institutions of higher learning. The CSSHS may also publish books, monographs, and other writings, and sponsor speakers, seminars, and research projects related to its educational purpose.

IRS tax-exempt status was granted December 30, 1977. All contributions are tax-deductible.

**Voting membership** is initially by invitation of the Board of Directors of CSSHS to candidates eligible on the following basis.

a. persons with at least a baccalaureate degree in the social sciences or humanities; or

b. persons 18 years old or over, who have held office in another creation-science organization with beliefs, substantially identical with those contained in the CSSHS **Statement of Belief**, for at least one year immediately prior to applying for membership in the CSSHS; or who have a commitment to our belief and work clearly evidenced by their record of actual involvement. Voting membership dues are \$12 (foreign, \$13 U.S.) per year.

Sustaining membership is open to those who subscribe to the C.S.S.H.S. Statement of Belief. Sustaining membership dues are \$12 (foreign, \$13 U.S.) per year.

Both voting and sustaining memberships include subscription to the **CSSH Quarterly**, and are reckoned as beginning and ending in September.

Non-members may subscribe to the **CSSH Quarterly** at the rate of \$14 (foreign, \$15 U.S.) per year.

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Cover Art by Sue Paar

ISSN 0740-3399



# Ten Years of the CSSH Quarterly

Ten complete volumes of the Creation Social Science and Humanities *Quarterly* have now been sent out into the world. In our ten years of publication the CSSH *Quarterly* has sought to be a contributing warrior in what Harold Lindsell called for in his best selling book *The Battle for the Bible*. Our intention, by God's grace, has been to honor the spirit of II Corinthians 10:3-5:

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:  
(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

Our prayer is that over the years this ministry has been instrumental in strengthening and upholding the faith of Christian students and scholars in the social sciences and humanities. A very brief review of significant materials published on its pages helps to sum up the thrust of this work for our long-time supporters as well as prospective newcomers.

The most popular article in CSSHQ's first issue (Vol.I, 1, Fall 1978) was "The Footprint of Dragons" by Lorella Rouster and dealt with the importance of dinosaurs for creation teaching. It has remained a favorite to this day. Dr.Ackerman's editorial on recent creation (Vol.I, 2, Winter 1978) already forecast his very popular 1986 best-selling book *It's A Young World After All*. Ellen Myers' musical composition "Psalm 8" also anticipated her subsequent study of composition and articles on artistic creativity. The next CSSHQ (Vol.I, 3, Spring 1979) first contained information on the Creation Social Science and Humanities Society, and the membership/subscription form, including Statement of Belief, with its emphasis on the "creation of Adam and Eve as one man and woman in the image of God and their subsequent fall into sin." In the last issue of Volume I Dr.Ackerman wrote the following conclusion to his popular article "The Impact of Creationism on the Social Sciences":

In summary, I believe we might expect scientific creationism to influence the social sciences in the following four ways: First, it would cause a redefinition of the domain and limits of social science. Second, it would lessen the current tendency toward social engineering and cultural management. Third, it would provide for a balanced conception of man as a free moral agent and subject to environmental and biological

influences. Lastly, it would lead to a higher regard for common sense and the naive view of both man and nature. (CSSHQ, Vol.I, 4 [Summer 1979], p.26.)

The Fall 1979 (Vol.II,1) CSSHQ saw information about the CSSHS for the first time inside the front and back covers where it is still found today (more space was needed for articles). This issue also featured the first "in-depth" article by Ellen Myers on a particularly influential scholar and/or philosophy of our time ("Sorokin's 'Integralism' vs. the Biblical Creation Position,). Vol.II, 2 (Winter 1979) of the CSSHQ contained Part I of the perennially popular and important article "The Biblical Chronology Question: An Analysis" by James B. Jordan, which was concluded in Vol.II, 3 (Spring 1980). The last issue of Vol.II (Summer 1980) published the CSSHQ's first article exclusively on biblical economics, "Creation and Inflation: Does the Bible Speak to Our Practical Problems?" by Dr.Edward Coleson.

In his editorial for the Vol.III,1(Fall 1980) CSSHQ Dr.Ackerman reiterated that

In the *CSSH Quarterly*, and by other means as God may direct, we will endeavor to show that *the only true and sure foundation* of man's knowledge of himself (psychology)--of his relationships with other men (sociology)--of his communication and creativity (literature and fine arts)--of his institutions of social order (administration of justice, economics, political science)--of his activities and their description (history)--*is the creation of man in God's image* as infallibly revealed in the Bible. All other attempts to account for man are vain and doomed to failure.

This issue also contained the creationist classic, first penned in the 1960s, by Dr.Rousas John Rushdoony, founder of the Christian Reconstruction movement, in which he pointed out that "Because God has created every fact in the universe, every fact must be understood in terms of the Interpretation placed upon it by God's creative purpose. We must strive in every area to think God's thoughts after Him." (CSSHQ,III,1 [Fall 1980],p.13.) The most important article of the next issue of the CSSHQ was Robert F. Smith's often cited "Origins and Civil Liberties" (III, 2 [Winter 1980], pp.23-27.) Here began also Ellen Myers' Part I of her monograph on the philosophy of John Dewey, continued in the next two issues. Vol.III, 3 (Spring 1981) contained a list of CSSHS "contact persons" in various parts of the world. Of the 36 friends listed, 21 are still with us (8 as Voting Members) seven years later. Vol.III, 4 (Summer 1981) featured Dr.Edward Coleson's impressive investigation of "The Bishop [Samuel Wilberforce] and "Darwin's Bulldog" [T. E. Huxley]."

We excerpt the conclusion of Ellen Myers' article "Why Be Moral?" in the Vol.IV,1 (Fall 1981) CSSHQ:

As usual, our conclusion will depend on our starting point. If we start with the determinist-evolutionist view of the universe as self-contained and "nothing-but" matter in motion ... then



by all means let us cast aside morality as a mirage, gone with the historical periods whence it arose. Of course we feel at home with some form of Hegelian dialectic materialistic relativism, and the more or less dictatorial conduct of mankind's affairs by some sort of "elite" . . .

Or else we can start—and conclude—with the Biblical creation of man in the image of the Triune God his Creator, Provider and Saviour/Redeemer, in which view the question, "Why be moral?" is equivalent to the question, "why live?" with total meaning for each human being . . . which not even death can destroy. For if man is created in the image of the ever-living God of the Bible—then he, too, has the potential of eternal life.

The choice is yours. (p.24)

Vol.IV, 2 (Winter 1981) published the first announcement on creationist materials for Catholics. In Vol.IV,3 (Spring 1982) Dr. Ackerman's editorial read in part: "Creation is an idea that threatens to turn upside-down many worldly scientific, theological, philosophical and even political establishments. Little wonder that enemies of Scripture and Biblical Christianity are alarmed." Dr. Ackerman also alerted readers of the CSSHQ to the fact that

Purely materialistic and atheistic evolution lies dead in the water in the eyes of more and more people. But this does not mean that all are or will be rushing to Biblical Christianity. There is an ancient and much more formidable foe waiting in the wings, it is pantheistic mysticism, or . . . "The ultimate evolutionist model: evolution by purposive forces" (see Daniel 11:38). When this foe becomes firmly established we may look back almost with nostalgia upon the old girl neo-Darwinian evolution.

In view of the phenomenal spread of "new age" cosmic evolutionist thought in both the social and the natural sciences since then, this was a prophetic assessment of what lay ahead. Vol.IV, 4 (Summer 1982) featured a poem which expressed the biblical creation view of people handicapped from birth. Carla Vale's "To A Retarded Child," based on the Song of Solomon 8:8-9, stated:

You have a special place  
In our Creator's perfect heart and mind,  
Beloved little sister! By His grace  
You shall appear adorned before His face,  
No longer seeming dumb and deaf and blind,  
Marked by the sin of Adam's fallen kind  
In your marred body. . . . and our song  
Shall praise Him for creating you, forevermore.

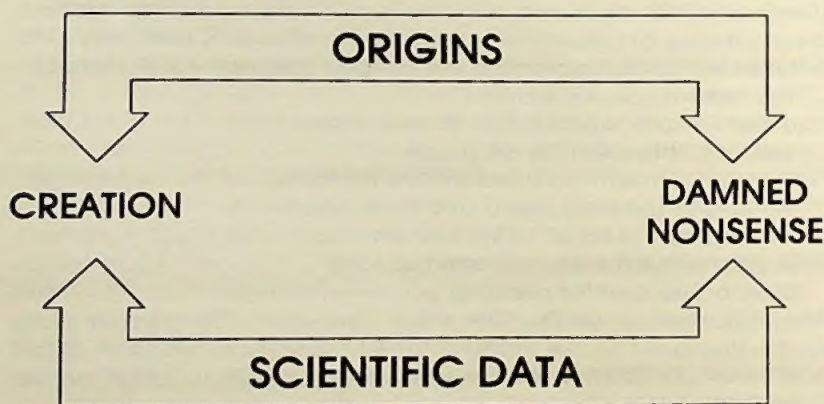
The important book *The Dominion Covenant: Genesis* by Gary North, President of the Institute for Christian Economics (P O Box 8000 Tyler, TX 75701), was reviewed in Vol.V,1(Fall 1982) of the CSSHQ. Here this prolific and thoroughgoing author deals with

(1) the God-designed harmony of interests between people

of varying abilities and backgrounds . . . ; (2) scarcity and time as both curses and also as blessings when rightly understood and employed; (3) management of the ecology by Biblical dominion covenant principles; (4) the relationship between . . . prosperity, and character; (5) a Biblical understanding of the notions of intrinsic and imputed value . . . ; (6) the entrepreneurial function in a godly economy. (p.21)

Vol.V, 2 (Winter 1982) featured a lengthy analysis of the misleading evolutionist "paradigm" in social theory and action by Ellen Myers. In Vol.V, 3 (Spring 1983) Dr. Ackerman's editorial and an article by Walter Van der Kamp dealt with the impossibility for man to evaluate the material universe if he is himself nothing but part and parcel of it. Vol.V, 4 (Summer 1983) of the CSSHQ was completely devoted to the arts and literature from the biblical creation perspective. Most interesting were Ellen Myers' article "Music Composition from the Biblical Creation Perspective," and especially the CSSHQ "Laymen's Reprint" of Kathy Lynn Hutson's outstanding and unique "Metaphor and Biblical Creation" (condensed from her article in Vol.I,1 and 2 of the CSSHQ).

Scholarships for creationist students in the social sciences and humanities were first announced in Vol.VI,1(Fall 1983), which also carried Dennis Farrell's "Creation and Human Language" (reprinted and abridged from Vol.I, 2 and 3). Vol.VI, 2 (Winter 1983) initiated articles on ancient history with Roy E. Hales' "Archaeology, the Bible and the Post-Flood Origins of Chinese History." Responding to Ellen Myers' "Damned Nonsense" in Vol.VI, 3 (Spring 1984), R. G. Elmendorf sent us his tongue-in-cheek drawing of "The Two-Model Approach" published in Vol.VI, 4 (Summer 1984), reproduced below. We feel this picture "speaks a thousand words" on the entire issue of biblical creation vs. *all* other "models" of origins and destiny.





We hasten on to Vol.VII,1(Fall 1984) and the excellent article "Race and Interracial Marriage" by Thomas M. Brown, Jr. He analyzed all Bible passages on inter-"race" or interfaith marriage, concluding that "race" is immaterial in marriage, but a believer must not marry an unbeliever. In Vol.VII, 2 (Winter 1984) Dr. John C. Whitcomb, co-author of the creationist classic *The Genesis Flood* and on CSSHS's Board of Reference, wrote an important article, "Creation Science and Biblical Creation." In it he said:

Can scientific creationism be detached from biblical and theological creationism and made to function effectively in the hearts of men on its own strength? That is a major question that creationists must face today. . . .

Two serious limitations must be faced. First, when creationism is isolated from biblical theology it is reduced to a mere scientific theory which, in the very nature of science, offers no ultimately authoritative answers or assurances . . . Probability, not certainty, is all that can be hoped for. Purely scientific cosmogony and cosmology would therefore seem to be locked forever into the ultimate frustration of "ever learning and never able to come to the truth" (2 Tim. 3:7).

Second, creation science, when isolated from the wider context of special revelation in Scripture, is devoid of theological identity from a Christian perspective. One might just as well be a Jewish or even a Muslim creation scientist as far as this model is concerned . . . (p.22)

We concur that these are crucial issues. We have also found ourselves arguing not so much from this or that "model" of "creation science" but rather from the biblical record of creation and the fall (though we have also published articles on the fit of psychological research with the creation of man). Vol.VII, 3 (Spring 1985) contained much material on the importance of biblical creation in the teaching and liturgy of Eastern Orthodox Christianity. The most popular and challenging article in Vol.VII, 4 (Summer 1985) was Ross S. Marshall's fascinating "The Ark Upon A Rock" (North American Indian Flood account).

The views of C. S. Lewis and George MacDonald on biblical creation were the chief subject of Vol.VIII,1(Fall 1985), which contained C. S. Lewis's satirical poem "Evolutionary Hymn." Vol.VIII, 2 (Winter 1985) announced the availability of creationist materials from the Catholic Creation Ministries, 24 Griffin St., Skaneateles, NY 13152. It also contained articles on Liberation Theology by J. Scott Horrell (Worldteam missionary to Brazil) and Dr. Edward Coleson. A well researched and documented article by Dr. Jerry Bergman traced "The Influence of Evolution on Nazi Race Programs." Finally, Vol.VIII, 4 (Summer 1986), wholly dedicated to psychology, explained "Why Secular Psychology is Not Enough" (William Kirk Kilpatrick) and "Counseling from the Biblical Creation Perspective" (Ellen Myers). This issue was used as a text in a weekly

seminar taught by Dr.Ackerman and Mrs.Myers at Wichita State University for Christian students in the 1986/87 school year.

Vol.IX,1(Fall 1986) featured the thoroughly researched "A Jewish Blessing" on Jews' accomplishments in all fields of human endeavor by Dennis Farrell. Vol.IX, 2 (Winter 1986) contained the well received "A Proof for Creation: The Hostility of Creation Denied" by Ellen Myers, and the hard-hitting "Indoctrination By Our Public Schools" by Dr.Jerry Bergman. Vol.IX, 3 (Spring 1987) published the fine summary of the importance of biblical creation "Creation: The Cornerstone of Truth" by Stan F. Vaninger, and also Judy Vorfeld's important "The Compelling World of Mind Control." Paul Gosselin investigated the historical beginning of modern science in his thorough "The Judeo-Christian Cosmology and the Origins of Science" in Vol.IX, 4 (Summer 1987) of the CSSHQ.

Vol.X,1(Fall 1987) contained scholarly articles by Douglas Groothuis on Hebrew (Old Testament) and by Ellen Myers on general historiography. Vol. X, 2 (Winter 1987) continued with Part II of Ellen Myers' monograph on "Thomas Molnar: A Christian Scholar for Our Time," of which the concluding Part III was published in Vol.X, 3 (Spring 1988). This brings us up to the present issue, Vol.X, 4 (Summer 1988).

Many other fine articles on numerous topics related to our purpose as well as many poems and informative book reviews have been published besides those writings singled out above. Most issues of the CSSHQ contained beautiful original art work, especially by co-founder and first vice president of the CSSHS, Mrs.Sue Paar. We have a backlog of many more excellent contributions and thank our Lord for sustaining us through our first decade of work, and in the years to come.

## ANNOUNCEMENT

### ADDENDUM

In Vol. X, No. 2 (Winter 1987) of the *CSSH Quarterly* we published the article 'The Impact of Christianity upon Kievan Russia' by Ellen Myers. In her article 'Millenium of Christianity in Ukraine,' published in the newsletter of Thoughts of Faith, Inc. *Behind the Iron Curtain*, Mrs. Vera Moroz informs us that 1988 A.D. marks the millenium of the Christianization of the *Ukraine*, not Russia. The empire of 988 A.D. was called 'Kyivan Rus', not Russia.

We thank Mr. Gary Lee Ferris of El Paso, Texas for bringing this information to our attention.



# **The Integrates Model for Relating Psychology and Christianity: A Critique in the Light of Biblical Creation**

*Paul D. Ackerman*

## **Abstract**

The "Integrates Model," as described by John D. Carter and Bruce Narramore in their book *The Integration of Psychology and Theology*, is examined in the light of the biblical doctrine of creation. A basic component of the Integrates Model is the assumption of the "unity of truth," which has the problem in application of placing the reading of Scripture on the same plain as the reading of scientific data in understanding reality. The unity of truth doctrine overlooks the unique character of Scripture as propositional revelation introduced by God into a fallen world for purpose of communicating to fallen man. An approach is suggested that would center on the concept of captivity (2 Corinthians 10:5) based on the Ten Commandments rather than integration.

Christlike thinking regarding a system of thought requires, among other things, an examination of the system's basic assumptions in the light of the Genesis record of creation. In this light, the present paper will examine an approach to relating biblical Christianity and psychology called the Integrates model. The Integrates model has been expounded and defended in *The Integration of Psychology and Theology* by John D. Carter and Bruce Narramore (Carter & Narramore, 1979). A recent survey found *The Integration of Psychology and Theology* to be one of the most influential books among psychology faculty teaching at Christian colleges and universities (Staff, 1987). The book is part of the Rosemead Psychology Series which "seeks to present current thinking on the subject of the integration of psychology and the Christian faith by examining key issues and problems that grow out of the interface of psychology and theology" (p. 5).

We assume that both psychology and theology offer a great deal toward an understanding of the human race. Consequently, no effort has been made to establish the validity of

either psychological methods or biblical revelation. . . . This volume assumes a basic commitment or openness to the data of psychology. . . . Most of these efforts are based on one essential philosophical underpinning — the belief that all truth is God's truth, wherever it is found. This proposition is frequently referred to as "the unity of truth" (pp. 12-13).

As these statements reveal, the essential feature of the Integrates model is that the products of Bible study and psychological research have equal claim upon our view of reality. Based upon this assumption, the Integrates model seeks to integrate biblical and psychological-research revelations into a unified view of human nature. The resulting *Weltanschauung* is ever in flux, however, owing to the continually advancing and expanding scope of scientific knowledge and theory.

### **Alternative Approaches**

Carter and Narramore present the Integrates model in contrast to three alternate models which are rejected. The first of the rejected models is the Against model which views Christianity and psychology as essentially incompatible with no real possibility for integration. "Proponents of this model frequently set psychology and theology against each other in ways that suggest that they are mortal enemies" (p. 73). The Against model is common among Christian fundamentalists.

The second rejected model is the Of model which finds value in certain biblical concepts but redefines them in ways that remove their supernatural content. Illustrative of this approach are attempts to subject biblical characters and events to psychological analysis in a manner that explains away their miraculous and divine aspects. It is common among Christian liberals.

The third rejected approach is the Parallels model which recognizes both psychology and Christian theology as legitimate but makes no attempt to integrate them. The Parallels model keeps theology and psychology in separate secular and sacred compartments. This can be done in an unreflective way in the manner of the "common man." In a more reflective form, psychology and Christian theology can be recognized as expressing the same truths, and effort can be expended to translate between the two. An example of this approach would be a pastor's use of psychology to illustrate and support biblical teaching. Carter and Narramore prefer the Parallels model to the Against and Of models, but as professional psychologists they still reject it in favor of "the possibility of genuine integration" (p. 94).

### **The Integrates Model in the Light of Genesis**

Carter and Narramore are Bible-believing Christians and as such accept basic biblical doctrines including those pertaining to the nature of man. They fully accept the view of man as created in the image of God as well as his subsequent Fall. Quite properly,



both of these doctrines are included in their formulation of the Integrates model.

The assumption that gives the Integrates model its unique and questionable thrust is the proposition of "the unity of truth."

Most of these efforts are based on one essential philosophical underpinning — the belief that all truth is God's truth, wherever it is found. This proposition is frequently referred to as "the unity of truth."

Christianity affirms that God is the Creator of all things and that this establishes a basic unity of all truth, whether found in scriptural revelation or scientific experimentation (p. 13).

The problem with the "unity of truth" doctrine is that it ignores the fundamental distinction between scriptural revelation and the stimuli which come to our senses from the creation. Scriptural revelation is not fallen. It consists of propositional statements introduced by God after the Fall for the purpose of communicating to fallen man. As such it takes into account man's and the rest of creation's fallen condition.

The Bible teaches that the creation, including the power of human reason, is fallen. Therefore, the interpretations and conclusions drawn from study of data emanating from the creation cannot be given equal status with clear and simple declarations found in Scripture, and the last thing Christians want to do is cloud the propositional teachings of the Bible by integrating them with the shifting sands of scientific theories and models. On the contrary, the crucial work of the believer is to preserve and advance that "once-for-all-entrusted-to-the-saints" faith which provides a fixed framework not only for lawful and productive science but for every aspect of life.

### **Unfolding the Integrates Model**

To state it again, the fatal misstep of the Integrates model is its assumption of the "unity of truth." From this assumption the model proceeds to a position in which scriptural revelation and scientific theory are on equal footing.

In almost every area of psychology, Scripture has much to say that can influence our understanding of psychological research, theory, and practice. This is what we mean by the term integration. Psychology is raising questions and providing data that bear on our theological understanding of the human being, and theology expresses divinely revealed truths that speak to psychology's developing view of humanity (p.20).

The logic is simple. Scripture is true but so are the data emanating from the creation. Man is fallen, however, and, therefore, fallible. Thus, his or her interpretation of both Scripture and the data from the creation are less than certain. (Again, the problem with this conclusion is that it ignores the unique status of

Scripture as an unfallen revelation by God introduced into the fallen world for the purpose of communicating to mankind.)

Despite its Christian trappings, the Integrates model, because of its unity of truth assumption, begins to have a humanistic flavor. The logic proceeds as follows: because of human fallibility, man is embedded in uncertainty, and the role of life becomes the quest for truth. This quest is conducted by striving to combine or integrate all of the "truth" available at any given time. Because we are always learning, our integrated understanding of the truth is ever advancing. The Scripture itself may be fixed, but our understanding of it will soar to ever higher comprehensions as its teachings are continually integrated with the advancing knowledge that stems from scientific research.

But we must venture out if we are going to build a meaningful integration. We need more empirical data to shed light on innumerable problems confronting the church. We need new scriptural insights and new theoretical concepts to understand better the nature of the human being and human functioning. And we need increasing application of our research, theory, and biblical interpretation. But if these are pursued in an isolated fashion, we will make very little progress. We must be willing to re-evaluate the answers that have been given to some old questions. And most of all, we must be willing to bring all conceivable sources of understanding to bear on our study of the human being and the human dilemma (p. 121).

### **More Than a Model**

For Carter and Narramore the Integrates approach is more than a mere model for integrating psychological and theological concepts. It is a way of life:

"By now it should be apparent that from our perspective integration is more than simply a matter of relating separate subject areas. Underneath our discussion is the assumption that integration is also a way of living and a way of thinking (p. 117).

The humanistic aspects of the Integrates model become manifest. The Integrates way partakes of a childlike openness to the world. A person in this way is viewed as a sojourner moving through life in a quest for higher truth and understanding. The central characteristic of this journey is a fearless and uninhibited learner's spirit:

Our discussion . . . leads us to what is perhaps the major hurdle to deeply integrative thinking. This is our own personal anxiety and consequent defensiveness, which forces us to be less than fully open to the truth about ourselves and others. . . . We become rigid, closed, or intolerant because we fear the consequences of openness. We have learned



that it is safer to restrict our awareness (p. 120).

As Christians we may affirm a partial wisdom in all this but only within the context of a certain, fixed and encompassing biblical framework. Contrary to the spirit of the Integrates model, the Bible warns Christians to be cautious and walk circumspectly. The sense of Scripture is that we are not to be conformed to this world but transformed to the mind of one who spoke not as the scribes but as one having authority. There is no evidence in the details of Christ's life to indicate that he operated in the manner of the Integrates model. On the contrary, the example of His life coincides with the plain sense of apostolic teaching which calls us not to integrate the world's knowledge with revelation but rather to bring the world's knowledge into captivity to the revelation. Far removed from the spirit of the Integrates model, the Christian's marching orders are set forth in II Corinthians 10:5 which instructs us to "[cast] down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and [bring] into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." We are not to engage in a quest for truth but rather to proclaim that we have been visited by truth and that God's Word is truth.

The Christian's resolve must be to avoid ultimate ties of loyalty not only to the Integrates model, but to any model. This is true not because of any human condition of perpetual uncertainty as claimed in the Integrates model, but rather because all models themselves are human constructions and thus beneath us. This would be true even if we were not fallen. Our fallen condition simply adds a practical reason (i.e. We cannot take human theories seriously because they are, in principle, fallible.) to the eternal wisdom which says that the creator does not bow down to his creation.

### **A Biblical Model for Psychology**

In keeping with the spirit of the second commandment against bowing down and worshiping idols (works of our own hands), scientific models and all ideas regarding how to deal with scientific models must be viewed as servants and not masters. We remember this in proper servitude and loyalty to our own creator and, also — in keeping with the example God has set for us — we do this realizing that we ourselves are greater than any model or theory we can create or derive. If we are obedient in refusing to worship the works of our own hands, we will discover a marvelous freedom. Our would be masters of scientific models and theories will become instruments and tools. In our freedom we will encounter occasions when wisdom calls us to operate in an "against" mode. At other times the "parallels," "of" or conceivably even something like the "integrates" mode will be proper. But the only "model" that can be allowed any claim upon our loyalty is the revealed model of obedient and faithful endeavors including those aimed at bringing the imaginations of the world into

submission to God and His Word (2 Corinthians 10:4-6).

## **Obedience**

Viewed in their New Testament context, the Ten Commandments provide an encapsulation of the Christian's "model" for approaching psychology or any other discipline. Commandments six through ten — against murder, adultery, stealing, lying and coveting — provide the framework for moral and ethical professional conduct. For the scientist, the ninth commandment — against bearing false witness — is especially significant in that it rules out lying about or misrepresentation of data. Love of truth is foundational to all scientific endeavor and, indeed, all Christian life.

The spirit of the fifth commandment — to honor thy father and mother — mandates in the present context an appropriate deference and respect for one's cultural heritage and social institutions. Commandment four — to remember the sabbath — warns us not to neglect our moment by moment walk with God through the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Commandment three — "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" — would in the present context adjure against the presumptuous use of Scripture or God Himself, as in some private vision or word of knowledge, to prop up a pet theory or model.

The first two commandments — "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" and "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image" among other things embody the principal argument of this paper which is that the products of human research and reasoning, however well established they may appear, cannot be placed on the same level as the revelations of Scripture. This is true because (1) scientific models are, in contrast to Scripture, human creations and thus beneath us; (2) the data on which they are based emanate from the creation and are thus affected by the Fall; and (3) man is fallen and therefore all theories he produces are fallible.

## **Conclusion**

Through His Word, God has provided a framework in which there is both structure and freedom. If we stand in firm, childlike faith in its clear declarations, refusing to be impressed by our own works and speculations, we will be blessed and enjoy the fruits of a productive and Godly psychology. In the freedom of Christ's Kingdom we will discover all the good and true things He has for us in the domain of psychology. As we research and discover, the sure truths of God's revelation can never be merely integrated with psychology's theories and models but rather provide a fixed, encompassing structure for advancing the science in Godly captivity.

Basic scriptural doctrines and categories can not be brought down to the level of man's theories and concepts in the manner called for by the Integrates model. If we do such a thing, the result



will be both bad Christianity and bad psychology. If we remain firm and steadfast in faith and submission to the whole counsel of Scripture and not just those doctrines that seem to pass muster in terms of contemporary philosophy and science, we will find the freedom and structure needed to conduct truly productive science. Within this context, and only within this context, will a place be found for the open, tolerant and undefensive learner's spirit that Carter and Narramore value. In Christ and in His Kingdom, the Word of God will become to us not yea and nay, but yea (II Corinthians 1:17-20).

### References

- Carter, J. D., & Narramore, B. (1979) *The Integration of Psychology and Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, A division of Zondervan Publishing House
- Staff. (1987 August) Trends studied among psych faculty, 1972-1984. *Christian College News*, p. 2

# Creation, Redemption and Sociological Theory

*Donald Ratcliff*

## **Abstract**

The present essay is an attempt to compare four sociological theories with three evangelical doctrines: creation, the fall and redemption. Where sociological theories and Christianity converge, theoretical concepts are retained, and where they diverge, theory is rejected in favor of Christian values. Biblical theology thus becomes a critical reference point for integrating sociology into a Christian worldview.

Four theories are predominant in modern sociology: conflict theory, functionalism, exchange theory, and symbolic interactionism. Conflict theory is an outgrowth of Marxist economics, emphasizing the inequalities and resulting disruption which can be produced by class differences. Functionalism can be understood as a social form of biological adaptation theory, society adapts to disruption and thus has an essentially stabilizing function. Exchange theory is a combination of behavioral psychology, emphasizing rewards and punishments, and the concept of profits in human relationships, a notion borrowed from classic economic theory. Symbolic interactionism emphasizes the person's interpretation of events, as do certain cognitive theories in psychology, and holds that social reality is a human construction.

## **Conflict Theory**

Gaede (1980) has summarized conflict theory for the purpose of contrasting it with functionalist theory. Essentially he describes society as a cluster of units, units which include upper, middle and lower classes. Because of differing interests, these units are in conflict, conflict only temporarily suppressed through the dominance of an elite, exploitive group of people. Change in society, according to this viewpoint, is the result of conflict and tends to take place suddenly.

Conflict theory has an essentially negative view of social systems (e.g. the family, education, the political system, etc.), most often perceiving them as perpetuating injustice and sometimes cruelty upon the "have-nots" of society. This is the case because social systems tend to be tools of the elite who use those systems to foster their views and protect their wealth; the advantaged exert force over the disadvantaged (Bridges, 1986). Ultimately the solution is



a redistribution of power and wealth, either through revolution (e.g. a communist state) or reform (e.g. a socialist state).

To illustrate, a sociologist who holds to conflict theory might analyze racial relations in terms of wealthy whites exploiting poor blacks. His analysis would likely emphasize that the present educational and family systems work to foster racial inequality, and thus call for not only more economic assistance for blacks but also for changes in the educational and family systems (e.g. cross-district busing and integrated neighborhoods). Most importantly, he would emphasize that improvement is possible only if these social structures are changed by *coercion*.

Conflict theory has been rejected by many Christians due to its association with leftist politics. Yet a number of Christian sociologists agree with its emphasis upon correcting injustice and maltreatment of the disadvantaged. They have emphasized that some of Christ's statements, as well as those of Old Testament prophets, underscore concern for the poor and unfortunate who are unable to help themselves. Yet others point to the oppression of leftist governments who have articulated Marxist thought; is left-wing cruelty any better than right wing cruelty? And has the welfare state eliminated poverty?

### **Functionalist Theory**

Gaede (1980) contrasts conflict theory with van den Berghe's summary of functionalism. Here society is described as a system of interrelated parts, which are generally in balance. Periodically disruption and conflict occurs, but these tend to resolve themselves. Change in society comes from the adjustment of social systems to difficulties and through innovations. Change is usually gradual, not sudden as conflict theorists suggest.

Each part of society (the systems, e.g. education, politics, and so on) contributes in some way to the smooth functioning of society, or in other words is "functional." When a system is not useful it either changes or disappears, thus maintaining a balance in society (Bridges, 1986).

Functionalist theory has much in common with biological adaptation theories. Systems of society emerge, change and disappear to maintain balance, much as biology describes the maintenance of equilibrium in nature or in the human body.

A sociologist who holds to functionalism is likely to believe that gradual improvement in racial problems is more likely than rapid change. He would be more likely to emphasize the positive changes that have taken place over the last several decades, and point out that social structures have worked to help bring this about. He might articulate how inequality was at one time functional to society, but that now it is not and thus change has occurred. He would *not* necessarily be more racist than a conflict theorist, he would only have a different perspective of the role of social structures.

Functionalist theory, surprisingly, has received a rather negative response from Christians (Scaer, 1984; Hancock, 1983). Like both conflict and exchange theory, it is a deterministic theory which tends to exclude human freedom. In addition some Christian sociologists indicate that functionalism would lack an emphasis upon change, which is perceived as central to the Christian message. Are we not to be the "salt and light" to our society, rather than assuming that social structures will balance and correct themselves?

### **Exchange Theory**

Exchange theory is derived from behavioral psychology, which concentrates its attention upon the behavior of people and the influence of reinforcement and punishment. Social exchange theory states that any relationship has both positive and negative aspects. When rewards outweigh costs, the relationship tends to continue, but when costs outweigh rewards the relationship usually ends.

In an extensive overview of exchange theory, Swenson (1973) emphasizes the importance of a "payoff" in interaction, profit motivates interactions. Yet rewards are relative to frequency; the value of a particular reward declines if it occurs a great deal, while with deprivation it becomes more valuable. He also describes a number of costs in a relationship, including alternatives that one must forego to interact, fatigue, and conflicts. Relationships are sought which maximize profits (profits = rewards - costs). Research cited by Swenson indicates that leaders tend to be those who are able to perceive and meet others' needs (give rewards), while minimizing costs. Thus exchange theory would state that validating the attitudes and perspectives of group members, while avoiding disagreements, is a means to popularity.

The sociologist who holds to this theory is likely to perceive racial segregation as due to the greater rewards and fewer costs that come from interacting within racial boundaries; e.g. different norms do not have to be understood and one does not risk rejection by interacting with same race peers. He might conclude that the solution to race problems is to decrease costs and/or increase rewards for integration through tax incentives or higher paying jobs.

Exchange theory is subject to most of the criticism leveled at behavioral psychology, including charges that it is mechanistic and an oversimplified perspective of human interaction. As Swenson (1973) notes, ultimately the most degrading and most noble behavior are equally described in crass terminology of rewards and punishments. Yet a number of Christians have written in favor of behavioral technology, if not its philosophy, as being consistent with Christian ideals (see Bufford, 1981; Cosgrove, 1982; Ellison, 1977). While certainly of value in analyzing relationships at one level, exchange theory certainly does not explain all of the



complexity of human interaction.

### **Symbolic Interaction Theory**

Karp and Yoels (1986) have produced one of the most complete summaries of symbolic interactionism, with applications to nearly every area of sociology. Like Piaget's cognitive theory, symbolic interactionism states that people make social constructions of reality. These social constructions are interpretations of what occurs (similar to the "self-talk" that some cognitive psychologists speak of).

With symbolic interactionism, however, interaction requires shared definitions of social situations. As people interpret events and contexts, they *confer* meaning to their situations, and then react according to that interpretation. Interpretation is based upon the verbal and non-verbal symbols, which constitute the components of communication within interactions.

The sociologist who holds to symbolic interaction theory would describe racial distinctions as being the result of social definition. He might point out, for example, that some people defined as "white" are darker than some who are defined as "black." Likewise every other characteristic that supposedly distinguishes blacks and whites has its exceptions, and thus the concept of "race" is more the result of social definition than it is biology.

The Christian would have certain reservations about symbolic interaction theory as well. Some would charge that since human interpretation and construction are central, human autonomy is overemphasized. Yet it must be recognized that God has endowed us with choice, and thus to an extent he has granted us a degree of autonomy. Symbolic interaction theory does not deny an objectively real world, but rather that our construction of the world is what we act upon in daily life. When meanings are shared, interaction is possible.

### **Christian Doctrines and Sociology**

Three pivotal events are recorded in the Christian scriptures which are foundational to a Christian worldview, and thus should interface with any theory that adequately reflects the real world. These biblical events are the origin of humanity, the fall-of-mankind and the redemption of the human race. Creation and the fall resulted in human nature as it now exists, while present and future redemption, produces "a new creation."

#### **Creation**

If one is to accept the Bible as authoritative, the creation account must be held as the basis not only for human origins, but also human personality and social interaction. As stated in the first chapter of Genesis, "God created" and he made humanity in his image. To what extent are the four sociology theories consistent with Genesis 1?

God's constructing through creation is reflected in the social constructing of humans, as stated by symbolic interactionism. We construct our sometimes faulty views of reality, an imperfect image of God's original construction of the real world and its inhabitants. As the Apostle Paul stated much later in history, "We see as through a glass darkly," while God sees perfectly.

Certain aspects of functionalism are congruent with creation. Social structures have the potential for the betterment of humanity if they function within God's intended plan "from the beginning of the age." Indeed God instituted some social structures (e.g. the family). And while the evolutionary form of adaptation theory is not acceptable, biological adaptation is a mechanism that God placed within his creation. As species can adapt to environmental changes, likewise human social structures have this same capability due to God's creation. It should also be noted that because God created us, and the rest of creation, he knows what principles need to be followed. His owner's manual for life is the Bible, thus Christianity is "functional" — it works.

Exchange theory relates to creation, as was noted in an ancient creed which states that the purpose of mankind is to "glorify God and serve him forever." Is our service to God the social exchange for God's creating us? Likewise, God seems to have programmed into humans the propensity toward seeking rewards and avoiding pain. Even a brief survey of the book of Proverbs indicates that rewards and punishments motivate human behavior, and the writer of that book emphasizes the importance of perceiving and seeking the long term rewards of a godly life.

Conflict theory is not compatible with the account of creation; conflict was introduced through the Presence of evil and temptation. This will be considered in the next section.

## **The Fall**

The temptation of Satan and resulting sin that alienated the human race from God is crucial to an adequate understanding of human personality and social behavior. Humanity is not as it was intended, we are fundamentally abnormal in an abnormal world. Sin is the only adequate explanation for cruelty, pain, and other problems.

The fall is perhaps most consistent with conflict theory, since it accounts for the presence of both active exploitation and more passive ignoring or even acceptance of injustice. Social conflicts do occur, including class conflicts and oppression by the elite, although this is certainly not the whole picture, as is indicated by the functional nature of some social structures. Whether oppression is more or less common under rightist or leftist regimes is debatable; certainly Marxism has not produced the utopian state it promises. It should also be noted that while conflict theory articulates the presence of the collective sin of mankind, it



overlooks the personal sin nature of the individuals involved, the ultimate source of all sin.

The Genesis account of the fall indicates that that the other three sociological theories must be delimited as well. The social constructions of symbolic interactionism are often faulty and inaccurate due to the effects of the fall, resulting in miscommunication and misunderstanding. Even when the social constructions of two people concur, the result can be less than ethical conduct because both participants are victims of the fall.

Likewise the individual is corrupted in the valuing of certain rewards and punishments because of the fall. Thus short term rewards ("sin for a season") are opted for to the disregard of long term rewards (eternity). Likewise materialism and love for what is abominable to God take the place of what is actually for our better good, which God prescribes in the scriptures.

Functionalism must likewise be delimited; the dysfunctional nature of social structures is clearly accounted for by the fall. While some of these difficulties are articulated by conflict theory, sometimes those structures are not clearly "oppressive" but rather just fall short of what was intended. The fall has not only corrupted humanity, it has also distorted us in other ways as well.

## **Redemption**

God has not left us in the fallen state without hope. He has provided a means for redemption, both now (through salvation) and in the future (ultimate redemption in heaven). Our goal in the present life is not only to accept Christ and his provision for sin, but also to work toward his second coming and the eventual end to the work of Satan.

The doctrine of salvation through Christ has a number of interesting parallels with exchange theory. Christ offers us eternal life in exchange for giving ourselves to him. Likewise the entire concept of a substitute sacrifice (Christ dying instead of us for our sins) carries the notion of exchange — an exchange that is grossly unfair to God, but certainly a profitable exchange from our perspective.

Consistent with symbolic interactionism, many of our old social constructions stay with us after salvation. Even our concept of God is a construction, but fortunately it is a construction that can be modified as we interact with him through prayer and reading the Bible. Our construction of reality should likewise be changed as we develop a relationship with our creator; a process sometimes described as Christ being "Lord" of our lives, or theologically the process of sanctification. As our social (and personal) constructions change, our behavior will also change. The Christian life requires rebuilding sociologically; the church is a source of "resocialization" (Grunlan, 1982).

While conflict theory describes the reality of social disruption and evil, it provides little in terms of answers and solutions.

Fundamentally it is at odds with Christian doctrine because it assumes that apart from the work of Christ people can save themselves. Much of the conflict perspective rings true because it is a Christian heresy; Marx added much to the biblical analysis that is incompatible with biblical solutions. Conflict theory is thus an oversimplification of reality in its analysis, and completely contrary to the Bible in its call for forced redistribution of wealth and power; the Christian concept of freedom in Christ is incompatible with the control advocated by most conflict theorists. The ultimate source of sin is overlooked, as noted before, thus the theory lacks the ultimate solution for sin.

Finally, functionalism is closely related to redemption. Our goal as Christians is to help make social structures more functional through redeeming the people within them. The groups in society are more likely to be functional in reaching God's intended goals if they are populated by Christians who are actively seeking God's will, both personally and in terms of the structures within which they work.

## Conclusion

In the author's opinion, symbolic interaction theory is perhaps the most compatible of the four theories, followed by exchange theory, and finally functionalist and conflict theories. Christian doctrines provide an exciting interface with sociological theories. This interface deserves further exploration.

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# Francis Schaeffer and B.F. Skinner

Donald Ratcliff

The late Francis A. Schaeffer, a writer and evangelist, has been an important influence among Christians for nearly twenty years. During the 1950's and 1960's, Schaeffer developed a unique ministry with youth, and soon became widely known for his intellectual approach to Christianity. He appreciated the fine arts, science, history and other areas of the liberal arts, but spoke often of the dangers of humanism found in much of the philosophy behind modern thought. *Time* magazine (1960) labeled his Swiss retreat a "mission to intellectuals," and many evangelicals appreciated his contrast of biblical faith with other world-views, demonstrating the superior qualities of a conservative, theistic perspective. His books, which at first were taken from his university lectures, became best-sellers and his influence spread rapidly among evangelicals.

In the latter 1970's and 1980's he also became popular with certain fundamentalists (e.g. Jerry Falwell), perhaps due to his anti-abortion stand rather than his earlier intellectual writing. This led *Newsweek* to label him the "Guru of Fundamentalism" (Woodward, 1982). Nearly all of his books have recently been compiled in *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer* (1985), while perhaps the best summary of his intellectual work is *How Should We Then Live?* (1976). Schaeffer's continuing influence can be seen in the release of several recent books about his ministry (Dennis, 1985, 1986, in press; Ruegsegger, 1986; Parkhurst, 1985; Fickett, in press).

In his earlier work, Schaeffer critiqued the famous psychologist B. F. Skinner, one of the best known behaviorists of our century. Schaeffer briefly spoke of Skinner's thought in several books, although his most extensive treatment is found in *How Should We Then Live?* and an earlier booklet *Back to Freedom and Dignity*. His generally negative view of Skinner raises a number of questions which should be examined by anyone interested in the behavioral approach to the social sciences and the parallel philosophy of behaviorism.

## Skinner's Concepts

Psychologist B. F. Skinner has proposed three possible consequences of any behavior: *reinforcements* which are consequences which increase the likelihood of behavior (such as praise



or food), *punishments* which tend to decrease behavior (such as a frown or a traffic ticket), and the lack of reinforcement or punishment which also tends to decrease behavior (such as no response to the punch line of a joke). He also holds that reinforcers can be learned (money becomes valuable because of its association with what is purchased) and that reinforcement need not follow every behavior to be effective (receiving a paycheck every two weeks).

Skinner assumes that *all* human behavior is ultimately due to the above influences. Sometimes the consequence occurred in the distant past, such as praise for tying shoes as a child resulting in continued tying of shoes into adulthood. Learning in the above ways is called "conditioning" and his entire system is often referred to as "behaviorism."

Skinner assumes that society can be perfected by systematically using his principles, a concept he developed in his early novel *Walden Two* (1948). Further, he believes that the words "freedom," "dignity," and similar ideas may have once had a positive function, but with the fuller understanding of human nature they are now outmoded and meaningless. Quoting from his landmark book *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, "To man [as] man we readily say good riddance" (Skinner, 1971, p. 191).

### **Problems Suggested by Schaeffer**

Francis Schaeffer (1976) describes several problems with Skinner's views. First, "Skinner cannot live on the basis of his own system" (p. 229). His only value is biological continuity of the human species, a value that cannot be derived from Skinner's system. Thus the system is not as complete as Skinner would have you think.

Second, there is no room for human nature, people are not uniquely distinct from animals, since we are only a "bundle of conditioning" (p. 229). Third, the determinism of Skinner's psychology leaves no room for the desire to be autonomous; there can be no shaping of destiny if there is no freedom.

Schaeffer also points out that a result of the mechanistic approach of behaviorism is the tendency to treat others and the self as one would machines. With such a mechanistic view of humanity there is less resistance to manipulation. Due to the popularity and influence of prominent behaviorists, Schaeffer fears the widespread application of behaviorism will increase the authoritarianism of governmental bodies. Says Schaeffer (1976), "... in Russia, political prisoners are put in mental wards to be reconditioned" (p. 239).

Finally, Schaeffer raises the question of who controls the controllers if behaviorism is applied society-wide. Without an adequate basis for morality (only found in the Bible), manipulation by authoritarian governments will destroy personal freedom.

## Other Problems With Skinnerian Behaviorism

Others such as Bufford (1981) and Cosgrove (1982) have noted additional difficulties in Skinner's radical conclusions. For example, his early research used animals as subjects; the extent to which one can generalize such findings to humans is open to question.

Some have noted that the regular use of certain reinforcers may promote materialism, poor nutrition or overdependence upon external rewards (in contrast to inner satisfaction or values). In addition, Skinner's ideas assume a closed system, as does a great deal of recent scientific research.

Finally, Cosgrove (1982) notes that Skinner does not differentiate between the *technology* of behaviorism, based upon empirical data, and the *philosophy* of behaviorism. He believes in both, but one need not hold to the philosophy to accept and make use of scientific findings.

## A Critique of Schaeffer's Analysis

Like Skinner, Schaeffer does not clearly discriminate between the technology and philosophy of behaviorism. Schaeffer has stated Skinner's philosophy adequately, but implies that the technology is inherently manipulative. The technology of behaviorism is compatible with Christianity if the presupposition of an "open system" is substituted for the humanistic "closed system" assumption.

Schaeffer seems to equate Skinnerian and Russian conditioning. Actually conditioning psychology in the Soviet Union is predominantly based upon Pavlov's reflexive conditioning rather than the American operant conditioning of Skinner. Russian psychology makes little use of Skinner's idea of consequences of behavior (at least in their psychological theorizing).

The dangers of behaviorism described by Schaeffer imply that the technology is very effective; if it were not powerful it would not be dangerous. One does not become more effective as a Christian (even in Christian ministry) by excluding effective strategies merely because they can be dangerous if misused. With biblical presuppositions and ethical guidelines, behaviorism can be a valuable tool for Christians. [One of Schaeffer's letters, quoted by Winter (1986), states this latter conclusion regarding psychology in general, but not specifically about behaviorism.]

Schaeffer's fear of widespread application of Skinnerian conditioning by authoritarian governments has considerable merit. Powerful tools in the wrong hands can result in terrible consequences. A number of psychologists, including many who are not Christians, have voiced similar concerns.

Schaeffer asks who controls the controllers. In response it can be asserted that control is ultimately reciprocal. Leaders certainly influence their followers, but followers can also influence their leaders. For example, a teacher using behavior modification to change her students is also influenced by the response of the

students (she is more likely to use behavioral methods if she receives the reward of changed behavior!).

Schaeffer's comment regarding the inconsistency of any value, including human survival, with behavioral philosophy is well stated. His comments on the uniqueness of humanity as resulting from being made in the image of God, are particularly valuable.

### **The Value of Operant Conditioning**

A careful reading of Schaeffer indicates that he does not completely rule out the use of operant conditioning: "The Christian position is *not* that there is no element of conditioning in life, but rather that by no means does conditioning explain what people are in their totality" (Schaeffer, 1976, p. 229). Even the use of animal experiments to understand people is compatible with Schaeffer's views; he speaks of people being in some ways like animals (finite) and in other ways like God (personal) (Schaeffer, 1968). Behaviorism demonstrates the commonality of creation which produces the similarity between people and animals.

Clearly conditioning can influence a person by predisposing one to choose certain behaviors, yet free will and choice do exist and God can intervene in human affairs (Ratcliff, 1981), both of which are implied by Schaeffer's concept of an "open system." Influence, rather than strict determinism, is more consistent with what has been found by psychological experimentation; in the social sciences one rarely, if ever, finds a 1.00 correlation as is found in the natural sciences (Bufford, 1981).

Skinner's operant conditioning technology, as well as all other scientific truth, has been discovered in God's natural revelation. "All truth is God's truth," wherever it is found. Conditioning is not only found in natural revelation, but also in the Bible (e.g. heaven is the ultimate reward, Proverbs describes positive and negative consequences for specific behaviors).

If conditioning is used by Christians, choice should be recognized through informed consent and other ethical provisions. Perhaps one of the best ways of enhancing freedom of choice is to teach the principles of behavioral psychology: the more one understands behaviorism, the more one is able to resist the control by others.

Conditioning theory is clearly insufficient as a *total* explanation of human personality. Other psychological theories, in the context of Holy Scripture, may supplement Skinner's concepts to form a more complete view of human nature. The mechanistic side of behaviorism would thus be offset by other theoretical perspectives.

With personal freedom acknowledged and respected, operant conditioning theory can be a valuable aid for Christians. For many specific applications of behavioral psychology within a biblical framework see Bufford (1981) and Ratcliff (1978, 1981, 1982, 1983)



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# In Reserve

*Viola Jacobson Berg*

What does a stone  
have to say  
for itself,  
so unperturbed,  
unruffled,  
unmoving;

and resting ...  
it really knows  
how to rest,

how to keep  
its own counsel,

to wait,  
and listen ...

It was given notice  
eons ago  
to be ready  
to cry out.

If man should  
ever neglect to praise  
the Creator  
the stones  
were alerted,  
eternally alerted

to break their silence  
and show the world how.

# "Ideas Have Consequences" and Biased Reason

Ellen Myers

In 1948 the University of Chicago Press first published a little book by Richard M. Weaver entitled *Ideas Have Consequences* which

met a response far beyond anything anticipated by the author. The book was written in the period immediately following the second World War, and it was in a way a reaction to that war — to its immense destructiveness, to the strain it placed upon ethical principles, and to the tensions it left in place of the peace and order that were professedly sought. . . .

It is a work of philosophy to the extent that it tries to analyze many features of modern disintegration by referring them to a first cause. This was a change that overtook the dominant philosophical thinking of the West in the fourteenth century, when the reality of transcendentals was first seriously challenged. . . .

The book was intended as a challenge to forces that threaten the foundations of civilization . . .<sup>1</sup>

The book was published in paperback format in 1976 and required or collateral reading in colleges for many years. This writer first read it for a course named "Business and Society" in the late 1970s. Interestingly enough it was assigned in the name of fairness by a scholarly professor who was both a political conservative and a determined atheist, and who thought it represented the classical conservative Christian position. However, *Ideas Have Consequences* is seriously, even irremediably flawed from the biblical Christian perspective.

It is true that Weaver makes a number of subsidiary points Christians can accept. On the first page he castigates the theory of history asserting that

the most advanced point in time represents the point of highest development, aided no doubt by theories of evolution which suggest to the uncritical a kind of necessary passage from simple to complex. Yet the real trouble . . . is the appalling problem . . . of getting men to distinguish between better and worse.<sup>2</sup>

Weaver deplors the loss of man's faith in a reality transcending



the senses, and with that loss the abandonment of the doctrine of original sin. He stresses the importance of form for culture, rightly stating that "unformed expression is ever tending toward ignorance."<sup>3</sup> He scathingly condemns the invasion of privacy and the scandal-mongering and tendentious reporting of the news media (already long before the advent of television). For example, he quotes the British educator and literary critic Matthew Arnold who wrote after a tour of the United States in 1888 that "if one were searching for the best means to efface and kill in a whole nation the discipline of self-respect, the feeling for what is elevated, he could do no better than take the American newspapers."<sup>4</sup> Weaver calls the media obscene because it displays for sensation-hungry masses, and for material gain, "scenes of intense private grief," and adds, "The area of privacy has been abandoned because the definition of person has been lost."<sup>5</sup> This is true enough, but Weaver does not say that human personhood is founded upon the biblical creation of man in God's own image and likeness. Prominent Christians who unlike Weaver speak openly, explicitly and unabashedly as Christians share his hostility toward today's perverted "news reporting." C. S. Lewis, for instance, loathed the daily press, in particular articles aimed at the subversion of intellectual public opinion leaders. The great Russian Christian Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn delivered a devastating condemnation of the Western news media in his prophetic June 1978 commencement address at Harvard.<sup>6</sup>

Weaver correctly states that modern education has shifted from the medieval ideal of preparing man for immortality to the materialist-utilitarian goal of preparing him to live successfully in this world. Modern education is failing "because democracy has rebelled at the thought of sacrifice . . . without which there is no training in intellectual discipline."<sup>7</sup> The need for a source of authority is imperative in modern egalitarian, inherently anarchistic society. Weaver points out that the modern notion of infinite material progress has produced "economic man, whose destiny is mere activity."<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, modern excessive specialization in work and research has led to an impoverished and limited world vision, the evil of scientism, and the fragmentation and relativism of modern philosophy. Weaver sees it as the cause of the decline of a "liberally educated class" in Western culture today.

Christians can agree most with Weaver's discussion of modern egotism in work and art, "a consequence of that fatal decision to make a separate self the measure of value."<sup>9</sup> Here is one of the rare places where Weaver does not hesitate to speak of sin: "The sin of egotism always takes the form of withdrawal"<sup>10</sup> from the community. Learning in the Middle Ages, on the other hand, led to humility according to Weaver, culminating in "Dante's *In la sua voluntade e nostra pace* [which] is the final discovery."<sup>11</sup> This quote ("In His will is our peace") is the closest Weaver comes to explicit Christianity and its faith in the personal, sovereign God and

Creator of Scripture in the entire book. This chapter is reminiscent of the theme of Francis Schaeffer's incomparable and unashamedly Christian *How Shall We Then live?* Occasional praiseworthy statements and quotes are also strewn through the book's last chapters where Weaver suggests means to rescue Western civilization.

With so much that is laudable, it is all the more sad, yet absolutely crucial, to single out those essential features of the book which Bible-believing Christians must reject. To begin with, Weaver "tried, as far as possible, to express the thought of this essay in secular language."<sup>12</sup> The implicit rationale for this approach is to facilitate dialogue with "secular" thinkers (that is, unbelievers). This inherently dishonest method is based upon the fallacy, dating back to ancient pagan-Greek thought, that man's "natural reason" furnishes a genuinely objective or neutral ground for "Socratic-style" discussion through which "truth" may be found. However, according to the Bible man's reason along with man himself is fallen, and it is therefore biased in favor of unbelief and rebellion against God and true, God-created reality. Today even unbelievers themselves admit that there is no such thing as "unbiased" human thought. Accordingly, Socratic dialogue can only produce consensus, not truth.

In addition, the disguised "secular" mode of reasoning with unbelievers simply breaks down in the end. Weaver himself admits that "there are points where it has proved impossible to dispense with appeal to religion."<sup>13</sup> The believing Christian cannot say what he really wants and feels it his duty to say in strictly secular language. He literally cannot help pointing ultimately to the Almighty, All-Knowing, just, merciful and loving personal God of the Bible "in Whose will is our peace." Because this is so, unbelievers (like this writer's professor) are not fooled by a Christian's assumed secularism. Neither are they mollified or seduced into acceptance of that "transcendental reality" Weaver defends

On occasion Weaver refers to the biblical record of the Fall and to Greek myths in the same breath: "In Greek fable, as in Christian, it is asserted that there is a forbidden knowledge which brings nothing into the world but woe."<sup>14</sup> Consistent with this contempt for the inerrancy and supreme authority of Scripture affirmed by all faithful Christians, Weaver does not include a reading of the Bible (or even of the early, universally esteemed Church Fathers, for that matter) in his proposals for reversing the cultural decline of the West. Instead he recommends the study of "literature and rhetoric . . . logic and [Socratic] dialectic" to popular education, as well as of foreign languages including Latin and Greek, in order to renew people's appreciation of words as "means of effecting order." Again, the basis of the importance of the correct use of language in Biblical creation is only as it were smuggled in at the end: "If the world is to remain cosmos, we shall have to make some practical application of the law that in the beginning was the

word."<sup>15</sup> Why does he omit all mention of the fact that this is a quote from John 1:1, and that this "Word" at the beginning "was with God, and was God"? As it stands, the statement is fuzzy and falsely "spiritual," an impression left by much else in the book and the one sure result of mixing "secularism" with "transcendentals."

Throughout the book there is an unwarranted hostility toward the middle class, commerce and "bourgeois complacency." Weaver's favorite is the medieval doctor of philosophy, comparable to Plato's philosopher kings, followed by the "gentleman" who in turn was superseded by virtual anarchy as the modern "specialist" rose to prominence. For Weaver, "speculative wisdom" or philosophy is somehow higher and nobler than science and technology. This is the elitist attitude of ancient Greece, especially Plato, presumably Weaver's favorite philosopher. He certainly prefers him to the more this-worldly Aristotle:

The way was prepared for the criteria of comfort and mediocrity when the Middle Ages abandoned the ethic of Plato for that of Aristotle. The latter's doctrine of rational prudence compelled him to declare in the *Politics* that the state is best ruled by the middle class. For him, the virtuous life was an avoidance of extremes, a middle course between contraries considered harmful. Such doctrine leaves out of account the possibility . . . that virtues like courage and generosity may be pursued to an end at which man effaces himself. . . .

Here the conception of Plato — expressed certainly, too, by Christianity . . . stands in contrast. . . . A life accommodated to this world . . . was what [Aristotle] proposed for his son Nicomachus. . . .

In Thomism, based as it is on Aristotle, even the Catholic Church turned away from the asceticism and the rigorous morality of the patristic fathers to accept a degree of pragmatic acquiescence in the world.<sup>16</sup>

Although Weaver devotes an entire chapter to private property as supposedly "the last metaphysical right," he does not really embrace it as good, does not see private enterprise as its extension, and has no good words whatever for commerce and industrial expansion as expressions of man's creativity. He totally overlooks the biblical concept of property as stewardship under God. His ideal world is that of medieval Europe with its rigid social hierarchy, its institutionalized inequality and poverty, and, expressly, its limitation of individual opportunity and material progress.

In his justified criticism of contemporary social fragmentation, utilitarianism and materialism he overlooks the different but also very real fallacies besetting the Middle Ages. Among them were the imbalance between "nature" and "grace," supposedly separate realms, and the related effort to reason from "nature"-based and supposedly universally accepted premises to the other-



worldly, transcendental world of "ideas," and even God. Thus St. Thomas Aquinas reasoned from motion observed in this world to an Aristotelian "unmoved mover," which he then called "God." In fact all of his celebrated five proofs for God's existence are arguments from this world's contingency upon an other, higher, transcending world, which is not by logical necessity the personal God of Scripture. St. Thomas also postulated the reality of universals (a concept taken from Plato's "Ideas"), whereas William of Ockham, the chief philosopher of the "nominalist" school, ascribed true reality only to particulars. Ockham's view prevailed, a fact in which Weaver sees the root cause of modern materialism-empiricism. Be that as it may (a separate book would be needed for adequate discussion), the faith of the Middle Ages relied primarily upon the reasoning of men (Weaver's "doctors of philosophy") as though the living God and Creator of the universe could be, or could assent to be merely the postulate of men's intellectual speculations. From the biblical Christian perspective, however, our faith "should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (I Corinthians 2:5), and therefore the defender of the Christian faith must act "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" rather than "with enticing words of man's wisdom" (I Cor. 2:4). God, of course, knew, converted and kept His own, true faithful in all ages, including the Middle Ages with their unbiblical appeal to "man's wisdom"; this writer is convinced St. Thomas Aquinas was God's true and faithful son. Nevertheless the very notion that man's reason and philosophy can validly undergird true Christian faith is but "wood, hay, stubble" built upon the true foundation, "which is Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 3:11, 12). Significantly, St. Thomas himself grieved on his deathbed because he felt all his work was but "straw" in God's sight.

Weaver, alas, also builds with "wood, hay and stubble" in his veritable adulation of human reason as the panacea for man's ills. In addition, and this is the fatal flaw of *Ideas Have Consequences*, his foremost concern is not the glory of God and truth. These are but means to his real end, which is the rescue of civilization. On this point he never dissembles; he tells us already in his foreword that his book was meant to be "a challenge to forces that threaten the foundations of civilization." On this aim, of course, he can have dialogue with unbelievers. But Bible-believing Christians can never agree to the use — the exploitation — of the lord and Creator of all things as the mere servant of civilization (though it is terribly true that only He can sustain and save it). It would be to make civilization a god above God. It would be to violate the First Commandment. To do so is to insure that civilization, now become an idol, is destroyed by our One and Only True God Who cannot share His majesty and glory with the flawed works of fallen men. When the civilization of Rome was at stake, Christians knew better than to place its preservation above the God of Scripture — and so

they helped a new and more glorious civilization rise from Rome's ashes.

The fallacies of *Ideas Have Consequences* are shared by many critics of Western society today. For example, in his 1987 bestseller *The Closing of the American Mind* philosophy professor Allan Bloom, like Weaver, deplors the decline of liberal education in today's college curricula and the specialization, fragmentation, and career-directed utilitarianism of students. His remedy, like Weaver's, is a return to the "Great Books," that is, the writings by Aristotle, Plato and other philosophers, so life, ethics, values and goals may be examined under their superior reason and guidance. Similarly Mortimer Adler has achieved fame in education with his "Paideia Proposal" recommending the reading of the "Great Books" as well as use of the "Socratic method" in the high schools of America. Anything but the absolute reality created, sustained and ruled by the God of Scripture!

In conclusion, while Bible-believing Christians can find much that is acceptable in books such as *Ideas Have Consequences*, they must reject the dishonesty of "secular language"; the notion that man's reason is somehow not fallen and can find neutral ground for dialogue with unbelievers; any and all forms of denial of the authority and inerrancy of Scripture; attempts to substitute men's philosophical formulations for God Himself and His Word; and the idolatry of the works of men's own hands and minds, including civilization. Ostensibly classical, "conservative" education without God cannot save and restore our nation or culture any more than the tried-and-true "progressive" education. As a matter of fact, the two are but branches from the same root, man's apostate reason exalting itself against the Creator Who alone has the power and wisdom to guide and prosper him.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Richard M. Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences* (The University of Chicago Press, 1948, Midway Reprint 1976), Author's Foreword, v, vi.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29. The inhuman exploitation of the stunned grief of this writer's daughter by TV photographers at the scene where one of her children had just been killed in an accident brought this point unforgettably home to us all. The horror is that journalists are actually taught and encouraged to gather their "news" in this obscene manner!
- <sup>6</sup> See *Creation Social Science and Humanities Quarterly*, V:1 (Fall 1982), pp. 24-25.
- <sup>7</sup> Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences*, p. 50.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72, and p. 182.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168, p. 167.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.



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